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# A Case of Persisting Hemorrhage from the Conjunctiva of a New-Born Infant,

*FOLLOWING THE INSTILLATION OF A SOLUTION  
OF NITRATE OF SILVER.*

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It is well known that Credé's method of instilling a drop of a two per cent. solution of nitrate of silver into the conjunctival cul-de-sac of the new-born infant to prevent purulent conjunctivitis, sometimes is followed by hyperæmia and secretion of the conjunctiva, which usually disappears in a day or two. Very few instances are on record in which the reaction has assumed a dangerous type, and the enormous value of this prophylaxis of ophthalmia neonatorum has shown that its author's judgment of the strength of the silver solution was wise. A few cases are known in which hemorrhage from the conjunctiva has followed this treatment, and has been attributed to the action of nitrate of silver. A notable example of this kind was published by Dr. Pomeroy in the MEDICAL RECORD for August 20, 1887. In his case the instillation of a single drop of a two per cent. solution of nitrate of silver, carefully done and without laceration of



the conjunctiva, was followed by violent pain, some serous discharge which rapidly became tinged with blood, and gradually developed into "a slow, but persisting, oozing of blood, startling to observe." After treatment, consisting mainly of iced compresses and firm bandages, the hemorrhage stopped, but not before the condition of the infant was most alarming, and the hemorrhage so decided as to prove well-nigh fatal.

The following case occurred in the maternity wards of the Philadelphia Hospital: A healthy colored woman was delivered, at 7 A.M., of a female child. The birth was a rapid one, the delivery of the head and the rupture of the membranes being almost simultaneous. The liquor amnii was of a dirty-yellow color and thick consistency. A drop of a two per cent. solution of nitrate of silver was instilled after the manner of Credé. Three hours later there was redness of the eyes and some discharge. The resident physician then made a second instillation of two drops of a nitrate of silver solution, twenty grains to the ounce. This was carefully done, and there was no laceration of the conjunctiva. The eyes immediately were irrigated with a saturated solution of boric acid, a treatment which afterward was continued each hour. At eleven o'clock at night no purulent discharge was manifest, but a bloody serum began to exude between the lids. The next morning iced compresses and a lotion of alum, four grains to the ounce, were used. In the afternoon I saw the case, and found a fairly well nourished infant with persistent bleeding from the tarsal conjunctiva of both eyelids, the blood leaking out between the palpebral fissures, some of it apparently having found its way through the lachrymal canals into the pharynx, as the child vomited some blood-stained material. The alum collyrium was continued, but no bandages were applied. The next day the hemorrhage continued, and with considerable severity. The eyelids were puffed up and their under surfaces covered with a very tenacious clot. This was removed with forceps, and the hemorrhage seen to occur from numerous



points in the form of a persistent oozing. The blood clotted readily. At the end of the third day the hemorrhage stopped, and the bloody discharge was replaced by a slight purulent secretion. A small linear ulcer formed near the edge of the cornea, which rapidly healed under the use of eserine. The child was somewhat shocked by the loss of blood, and the bodily temperature was maintained by the application of external heat.

The mother of this child was perfectly healthy, and never had experienced excessive bleeding herself. She knew of no member of her family who had been so afflicted. It was not possible to interview the husband, but the wife stated that he had not been a "bleeder," nor, so far as she was aware, had there been any hæmophilic tendency in his family.<sup>1</sup> Examination of the blood-clot did not reveal any unusual composition. There was no scar in the conjunctiva, after it healed, to indicate that any injury had been done to its surface.

While it is not possible to prove that this child bled so persistently from the conjunctiva because of two drops of the silver solution, first of two and then of four per cent. strength, it is none the less true that the hemorrhage followed such applications, and, moreover, occurred not in association with the development of an ophthalmia neonatorum, as the original discharge, which appeared only three hours after instillation, seems more likely to have been of that character which has been noted in several instances as the result of the reaction produced by the nitrate of silver.

I am indebted to Dr. Frances C. Van Gasken for her intelligent care of this case, and to my colleague, Dr. Montgomery, for the privilege of having seen it.

<sup>1</sup> So far as the writer is aware no cases of hæmophilia have been described in the colored race.





